

FURTHER READING

- British Thoracic Society Standards of Care Subcommittee on Pulmonary Rehabilitation. Pulmonary rehabilitation. *Thorax* 2001; **56**(11):827–34.
- Lacasse Y, Goldstein R, Lasserson TJ, Martin S. Pulmonary rehabilitation for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2006; **4**:CD003793.
- National Collaborating Centre for Chronic Conditions. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. National clinical guideline on management of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in adults in primary and secondary care. *Thorax* 2004; **59**(Suppl 1):1–232.
- Nici L, Donner C, Wouters E et al.; ATS/ERS Pulmonary Rehabilitation Writing Committee. American Thoracic Society/European Respiratory Society statement on pulmonary rehabilitation. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med* 2006; **173**(12):1390–413.
- Troosters T, Casaburi R, Gosselink R, Decramer M. Pulmonary rehabilitation in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med* 2005; **172**(1):19–38. Epub 18 Mar 2005.

PAST PRESIDENTS

Dr William Seller, MD, FRCPEd. FRSE (1798–1869)

William Seller was born in Peterhead in 1798, his father a successful merchant trading with the Baltic States, his mother said to have been a very beautiful girl of 16 when she married. Sadly she was widowed within a few years, left to bring up two daughters and an only son, William. What little money she had was lost when somewhat naively she took some bad advice. It was then that she decided to move to Edinburgh, earn a modest living and have her children educated.

Seller became a pupil of Benjamin Mackay who had a private school in Register Street before taking up an appointment as a teacher in the High School taking Seller and some other pupils with him. Seller was an outstanding pupil.

When he was accepted by the University of Edinburgh to study classics and philosophy before medicine, he obtained permission to work as a tutor to other boys, earning sufficient money to relieve his mother of all her financial problems as well as paying his own fees and expenses. On graduating MD in 1821, the first thing he did was to open a boarding house for

medical students as well as continuing to tutor those able to pay him.

Seller was remembered as much for his natural charm and kindly humour as for his academic achievements and clinical skills. The Harveian Society, 'impressed with the potent influence of his quaint humour and cheery laugh', even conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor Hilaritatis. He was renowned for his intellect, his encyclopaedic memory and the gentle way he questioned his students, always trying to be positive and constructive, even when their answers had been wrong.

He became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh in 1836, was its President 1848–1850 subsequently becoming a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. In fact he was honoured with a medal from the Royal Society for his memoirs on the life and writings of another President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, Dr Robert Whytt (1714–1766). In addition to his position in the Harveian Society, he was President of the Medico-Chirurgical Society 1854–1856.

For many years, he served as a physician in the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and the Royal Public Dispensary, as well as lecturing on *materia medica* and dietetics. He was

an examiner in medicine for the University of Edinburgh and for the College until shortly before his death. On one occasion when he was blamed for being too lenient with a candidate he replied: 'Your object in examining should be not to find out the ignorance but the knowledge of those whom you examine.'

By today's standards he wrote few papers, but those that he did have published reveal much about him and his interests. The topics range from acupuncture for lock-jaw to homeopathy; from the metaphysical aspects of physiology to the remedial uses of oils of turpentine and juniper; from the fatty heart to medicine as an art.

In May 1865, he lost his last surviving sister and soon thereafter developed jaundice. It was a long time before he sought medical advice for his increasing girth, lethargy and tendency to fall asleep. His friends Mr Archibald Dickson, FRCS, Sir James Young Simpson and Dr Alexander Wood agreed that he had massive hepatomegaly, ascites and eventually hydrothorax. Surprisingly he lingered on, only dying on 11 April 1869, aged 71. It is said that the President and every member of the Council of the Royal College of Physicians free to attend his funeral did so.

Derek Doyle
Obituaries Editor, The Journal RCPE